

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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R 081553Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8014

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USUN NEW YORK 0340

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGUI 2364

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CT, US

SUBJECT: FIRST TOUR D'HORIZON WITH EMPEROR BOKASSA

1. EARLY IN THE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 7, I WAS CALLED TO THE PALACE FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH THE EMPEROR, AN AUDIENCE WHICH I HAD REQUESTED TWO WEEKS BEFORE BUT WHICH WAS DELAYED BECAUSE OF THE NATIONAL DAY FESTIVITIES AND THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE. I TOOK THIS OCCASION TO PRESENT BOKASSA WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER'S LETTER OF THANKS FOR BOKASSA'S EARLIER CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE.

2. BOKASSA, AS INFORMAL AND RELAXED AS EVER, EXPRESSED GREAT PLEASURE AT PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER AND ITS INDICATION OF A DESIRE FOR CONTINUED CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. BOKASSA SAID THAT THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE WOULD IN NO WAY CHANGE HIS GOVERNMENT'S PRO-WESTERN POLICIES. INDEED IF ANYTHING IT WOULD STRENGTHEN THEM, SINCE THE COMMUNISTS DID NOT APPRECIATE MONARCHICAL INSTITUTIONS. I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE CAE'S CONTINUED MODERATE POSITIONS IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND AT UNESCO AND BOKASSA REITERATED THAT THESE WOULD CONTINUE.

3. RETURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER, BOKASSA SAID HE WAS CURRENTLY REVIEWING HIS TRAVEL PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD BEEN INVITED TO THE UNITED STATES BY SEVERAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS AND HE HOPED THE INVITATION WOULD BE RENEWED  
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BY THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. I SAID IT WAS, OF COURSE, IMPOSSIBLE TO

MAKE ANY COMMITMENT AT THIS TIME. WHILE I HOPED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR BOKASSA TO VISIT THE US AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE, OBVIOUSLY ANY VISIT WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY PLANNED AND TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE MANY DEMANDS WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY BE PLACED ON THE NEW PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE. BOKASSA IMMEDIATELY ACKNOWLEDGED THIS FACT AND SAID THAT HE WAS THINKING OF A VISIT IN A YEAR TO 18 MONTHS TIME, PERHAPS IN THE SUMMER OF 1978 WHEN THE NEW PRESIDENT HAD HAD A CHANCE TO SETTLE INTO OFFICE.

4. I ALSO TOOK THE OCCASION OF MY CALL TO REVIEW WITH BOKASSA THE RECENT VISIT OF DALTON GRIFFITH AND AN AID TEAM FROM YAOUNDE AND TO THANK HIM FOR THE SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE WHICH HIS GOVERNMENT HAD PROVIDED. BOKASSA SAID HE WAS PLEASED THAT THE VISIT HAD GONE WELL AND THAT THERE WERE POSSIBILITIES FOR US ASSISTANCE IN VARIOUS AREAS. THE SIZE OF INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS, HE NOTED PARENTHETICALLY, WAS NOT IMPORTANT. SMALL PROJECTS SUCH AS THE ARTISANAL CENTRE AT MONGOUMBA AND THE DISPENSARY AT BOGANGUI (BOTH SELF-HELP PROJECTS) MET A VERY REAL NEED, ALTHOUGH HE HOPED OUR EFFORTS WOULD GRADUALLY EXPAND IN THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WHICH CHARACTERIZED OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.

5. COMMENT: BOKASSA'S EMPHASIS THROUGHOUT THE MEETING WAS ON CONTINUITY OF POLICY UNDER THE EMPIRE. HE WAS CLEARLY MAKING A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO REASSURE US THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ABANDONING HIS TRADITIONALLY CONSERVATIVE POSITIONS. HE EVIDENTLY FEELS ISOLATED AND APPEARS AWARE OF THE DISSATISFACTIONS WHICH THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE HAS ENGENDERED. RELATIONS WITH US AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES HAVE THEREFORE BECOME MORE IMPORTANT TO HIM. ALTHOUGH THE FUTURE OF BOKASSA'S SYSTEM IS UNCERTAIN, (BANGUI 2342) IT CONTINUES TO FUNCTION AND OUR POSTURE SHOULD BE ONE OF BUSINESS AS USUAL. WE SHOULD, IN PARTICULAR CONTINUE WITH OUR EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY PROJECTS IN THE AID FIELD WHICH WILL BRING LONG-TERM BENEFIT TO THE PEOPLE OF CENTRAL AFRICA.

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